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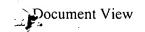
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Abstract (Document Summary)

The \$25.7 million -- collected in a campaign that annually goes from June to June -- falls short of the organization's all-time high of more than \$30 million, received in 1991. By the mid-1990s, however, donations to the United Way had dipped to barely \$21 million.

More than 200,000 employees across the county regularly contribute money from their paychecks to the United Way. The charity distributes most of its donations to other nonprofit groups around the region.

Across the United States, the climate for charitable donations dropped sharply over the past 12 months, according to researchers at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University.

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A nationwide slump in charitable giving apparently hasn't deterred San Diego County residents from handing money over to the United Way.

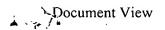
Organizers of the charity's annual fund-raising drive announced yesterday that they surpassed collections from a year ago, despite a major decline in philanthropy across the country.

United Way reported 2002-03 donations of just over \$25.7 million - - a few thousand dollars more than the charity collected a year ago, but far more than most other organizations have been able to raise.

"In these tough economic times, it feels good to report an increase of any amount," United Way president and chief executive officer Fred Baranowski said in a prepared statement.

"San Diegans should be proud that they maintained their level of support this year, as many United Ways around the country and the agencies they serve suffered decreases due to the sluggish economy."

The \$25.7 million -- collected in a campaign that annually goes from June to June -- falls short of the organization's all-time high of more than \$30 million, received in 1991. By the mid-1990s, however, donations to the United Way had dipped to barely \$21 million.



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United Way officials said they trimmed overhead costs from 17.6 percent to 13.8 percent over the past three years, making more donations available for program services. The agency estimates that more than 1 million people in San Diego County benefit from United Way-funded programs each year.

"Every little bit helps," Jerry Sanders, the former San Diego police chief who was this past year's campaign chairman, said in a news release.

"Giving a few dollars through payroll deduction makes a huge difference, no matter what your income, and is the most convenient means of supporting those in need."

Across the United States, the climate for charitable donations dropped sharply over the past 12 months, according to researchers at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University.

Among other conditions, researchers cited the struggling economy and the continuing war in Iraq for what they concluded was a decline of almost 19 percent in the so-called Philanthropic Giving Index, an all-time low since the survey was begun in

"Fund-raisers are being hard-pressed to diversify funding sources to support important initiatives and to be ever more efficient in the work they do," said Eugene R. Temple, the center's executive director.

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